

# VA Voluntary Service

## N E W S L E T T E R

for the volunteers of the VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York

September/October/November 2002 • Volume 2, Issue 3

### Planetree Grows

Planetree looks for ways to enhance patient care without losing sight of the individual. The VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York has begun rolling out the Planetree philosophy at each of its facilities. Planetree's holistic approach encourages healing on all dimensions - mental, emotional, spiritual, social, and physical.

#### Albany

Recent medical center renovations have incorporated the Planetree philosophy in many areas. The operating room/same day surgery unit added an aquarium and new furniture. Patients now have a refreshment area too. On the inpatient units, private bathrooms and semi-private rooms were created for female patients.

Nature and the arts are also a part of the environment of care at Albany. A previously unused patio was converted into a landscaped meditation maze (the Labyrinth). Music therapists have a weekly schedule of musical events where the patients are both performers and audience.

#### Bath

The Nursing Home Care Unit has created the Snoezelen room. The Snoezelen concept was developed in Holland to provide people with stimulation and pleasure through heightened sensory experiences via sight, sound, touch, and smell in an environment of trust and relaxation.

#### Canandaigua

The Canandaigua VA Medical Center (VAMC) was recently awarded the Network 2 Best Practice Award for the staff's work and commitment to Planetree concepts. Canandaigua VAMC now has: massage therapy (provided by massage students), yoga and stress management classes for patients and staff, new gardens, a video library for patients, and staff education about Planetree.

#### Western New York

Western New York has held monthly Planetree events since December. Each event is different and has included: music, a magician, choral group, students, senior citizens, etc.

One of the biggest Planetree events held across the Network occurred in June at the Batavia site. Several hundred school children from the All-Catholic Schools

Choir of Genesee and Wyoming Counties paid tribute to veterans as they sang and signed (in American Sign Language) many patriotic and inspirational songs.

#### Syracuse

The Syracuse VAMC has been busy planning many initiatives in line with the Planetree philosophy including: special events, entertainment programs, friendly visits, and community activities. They have also added/renovated a fish pond, patio, Veterans Service Center, and hospice rooms, and much more!

The possibilities for Planetree are endless but we rely on donations and volunteers to help make it happen. Contact your Voluntary Service office to see how you can become involved.





## Advisory Board

### Albany

Karen Haas (518) 626-5506

### Bath

Susan DeSalvo (607) 664-4773

### Canandaigua

Robin Johnson (585) 393-7759

### Syracuse

Robert Hawes (315) 476-7461 ext. 2617

### Western New York (Buffalo & Batavia)

Mark Francis (716) 862-8667

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Network 2 Print Shop/Graphic Arts, Bath

Produced by Network 2 Communications Department. Printed by students in the Pre-Vocational Apprenticeship Program, Graphic Arts, Bath



The VAVS newsletter has been created for all volunteers and potential volunteers of VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York. This publication is meant to showcase the wonderful work all of our volunteers contribute to VA. Please do not hesitate to contact anyone on the Advisory or Editorial Boards with your comments, corrections or suggestions.



**Visit Our Network Web Site**

[www.va.gov/visns/visn02](http://www.va.gov/visns/visn02)

*Network Director, Fred Malphurs has been asked to serve on special assignment in Washington DC.*

*Mr. Malphurs is acting as Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary on the CARES initiative.*

Phase II of the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) process began June 6, 2002. CARES is a plan to redesign our medical system to continue to bring VA health care into the 21st century. To accomplish this, it may be necessary nationally to shift some services and to find other uses for buildings that are not suitable for delivering modern health care. The goal is to give veterans the care they need, when they need it, and in the most appropriate location. The restructuring of VA health care will change only the way VA delivers care - health care services will not be reduced. These decisions will not be made lightly or in a vacuum. There is a comprehensive nine-step process for gathering necessary data, analyzing gaps between available

services and needs, and developing a plan for matching VA facilities and services with veterans' future

health care needs. Your input as well as the input of veterans, academic affiliates, and others will be sought and considered throughout the process. CARES will assure that we are positioned to do that now and in the future. It is too early in the two-year process to speculate what health care realignments and enhancements will be made. You can be assured that open communication is a critical part of the CARES process. Watch for continued local and national CARES updates.

Sincerely,

Fred Malphurs  
Network Director



## Network Wins the Kizer - Highest VHA Award

Network 2 was the first place winner for the 2002 Kizer Quality Award, the Veterans Health Administration's most prestigious award for organizational quality and effectiveness. The award is open to each of the 21 VA Networks and is based upon the Malcolm Baldrige criteria, the world's foremost standards for running an effective organization.

The 2002 Kizer Award for Network 2 included a crystal trophy and \$300,000 for first prize. Prize money is earmarked to fund initiatives that will improve quality of care, such as telemedicine for community-based clinics and home care, retinal cameras and related equipment, and other non-recurring quality enhancement initiatives.





# Volunteer Opportunities

## Albany

- ❖ Ambassador Greeter to greet veterans as they arrive by vans, get wheelchairs and escort to clinic appointments
- ❖ Cemetery Information Booth at Saratoga VA National Cemetery weekdays and weekends
- ❖ Clerical Assistance at Clifton Park, Glens Falls, Kingston, Malone, Plattsburgh, Fonda, Schenectady, Catskill, Elizabethtown and Troy outpatient clinics
- ❖ Drivers for the parking lot shuttle service and Volunteer Transportation Network program
- ❖ Patient Companion on Hospice Unit
- ❖ Pharmacy pickup window and refill the automated dispensing machine (robot)
- ❖ Veterans Industries Office Assistance - clerical assistance needed at the Ontario Street location to support day-to-day office operations
- ❖ Visit with homebound veterans to give caregivers a 'break.' Volunteers matched to veteran in hometown proximity. Fingerprint security check required.

## Bath

- ❖ Birthday program
- ❖ Clerical - assemble patient handbooks
- ❖ Historical Museum
- ❖ Information desk
- ❖ Outreach workers
- ❖ Respite
- ❖ Stand Down Coordinators
- ❖ Women Veteran Mentors

## Canandaigua

- ❖ Clerical assistance
  - Appointment reminder phone calls at Rochester Outpatient Clinic
- ❖ Companion therapy
- ❖ Dementia - orientation and monthly meetings provided
- ❖ Golf course
- ❖ Patient escort/transport
- ❖ Performance groups - musical, hobby, performance, etc. to perform for patients
- ❖ Recreational activities
- ❖ Volunteer Transportation Network (DAV) - drivers and office coordinator

*We are always looking for volunteers. There are just a few of the opportunities available.*

## Syracuse

- ❖ Clerical/general - escorting, filing, making reminder calls and answering telephones, etc. at the Binghamton and Rome Outpatient Clinics
- ❖ Evening Escorts - transporting patients, delivery of specimens, etc.
- ❖ Pharmacy - deliver prescriptions (to wards), work at window dispensing filled prescriptions, mailing prescriptions, etc.
- ❖ Rehab Unit (outpatient) - scheduling appointments, reminder calls, filing, transporting patients back to floors, etc.

## Western New York

- ❖ Activity Buddy Program - nursing home care unit - Batavia
- ❖ Clerical - filing, photocopying, running errands, mailing, paper shredding, etc. - both sites
- ❖ DAV/Volunteer Transportation Network - transport veterans to and from appointments - both sites
- ❖ Greeters - welcome veterans and visitors, help them get around the facility - both sites
- ❖ Guest Parking Lot Shuttle - transport veterans and guests from cars to and from outpatient entrance - Buffalo
- ❖ Patient Escort/Transport Service - assist patients to and from appointments, and other needs as they arise - both sites

## Free Computer Classes Offered

The VA offers free computer classes to volunteers on the topics of Computer Basics and Internet Basics. Information about upcoming classes is available at: [www.va.gov/visns/visn02/is/training.html](http://www.va.gov/visns/visn02/is/training.html) or from your volunteer office.





## News from...

### Albany

#### Pet Therapy

Albany has some wonderful four-footed volunteers that bring their youthful exuberance and affection to our hospitalized veterans. **Stephanie Bonenfant**, Volunteer Specialist is the coordinator of the Pet Therapy program. This program provides opportunities for the display of affection and to facilitate appropriate expressions of emotions, and to provide an environment that will enhance the quality of life and humanize the environment. We currently have nine dogs, one ferret, and nine handlers in our program. Their patriotic scarves and volunteer ID badge identify them as official VA Pet Therapy Volunteers.



*Two of our Therapy Dogs and their handler deliver Valentines to our patients.*

#### Women Veterans Health Fair

The 14th Annual Women Veterans Health Fair and luncheon will be held at the Stratton VA on Friday, November 8 from 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. in the 3rd floor auditorium. This annual event and Salute to Women Veterans

will showcase the comprehensive services available to them. Displays, booths and exhibits include the Vet Center, respiratory therapy, blood pressure and weight screening, osteoporosis, nutrition, pharmacy, eligibility, mammography and women's health, Veterans Counselors, Department of Labor, and many more.

### Bath

#### Nik and the Nice Guys Fund Raising Event

On June 28, the Charles E. Wescott, American Legion Post #173 and the Bath VA Medical Center joined forces to benefit local veterans. Nik and the Nice Guys, a high energy, mainstream rock and roll band performed at the Bath Fairgrounds. The performance incorporated music and dance with a high tech video and light show that invites everyone to join with the band and have a great time.

Approximately 90 veterans from the Bath VA Medical Center attended thanks to the generosity of organizational sponsorship.

A portion of the proceeds from this event supported veteran attendance at the National Golden Age Games in Los Angeles, CA in August 2002.



*The crowd enjoys dancing to the music of Nik and the Nice Guys.*

### Canandaigua

#### Volunteer Mourned

Long time volunteer, **Helen Gladwin** passed away on June 22 at Clifton Springs hospital. She was 99 years old. Up until three weeks before her death, Helen was volunteering two days a week at building 7.

We will all miss Helen and although she had no family, her goal in life was to be committed to helping veterans at our hospital, where she had a facility full of family and friends. Helen made us famous...she was the oldest volunteer with the most volunteer hours (91,721 hours to be exact). We hope that she passed away knowing how much we will miss her.

A memorial gazebo is being built in her honor. Please contact the voluntary service office for details.

### Bingo

Bingo is held in the auditorium. Escorts are needed and should arrive 1/2 hour before the event. Contact **Hank Riegel** at (585) 393-7370 if you'd like to volunteer.

Bingo schedule:

September 15 - 2:00 p.m.

October 1 - 7:00 p.m.

October 20 - 2:00 p.m.

November 5 - 7:00 p.m.

December 3 - 7:00 p.m.







## News from...

### Syracuse

#### Recliners Add Comfort to Outpatient Infusion Area

The Syracuse VA Medical Center's same day surgery/procedure area, has recently expanded its services to include outpatient infusions. Our new responsibilities include infusions to treat various disease processes like rheumatoid arthritis, Paget disease, osteomyelitis, and anemia. These new services are a perfect compliment to our current role as an outpatient surgery and procedure center where patients come in for general, vascular, thoracic, orthopedic, ophthalmology, urology, ENT and neuro surgeries, as well as interventional procedures: angiography, cardiac catheterization, lung biopsy, liver biopsy, and bronchoscopy. The transition has been smooth and seamless with the assistance of voluntary service and purchase of four recliners for the comfort of our new infusion patients. Patients and staff are ecstatic with the new chairs and appreciate the quick response of voluntary service to the needs of this special group of veterans'.



### Western New York

#### Farm Country USA - "Art on the Hoof"

Batavia's "Patriot Cow" was part of the Genesee County bicentennial celebration where she was displayed at the Fourth of July Celebration in Batavia's Centennial Park and also in a recent bicentennial parade held in LeRoy. When not on display at special events, she is grazing on the front lawn of the VA facility much like the "Buffalo Soldier" does at the Buffalo site.



*Batavia's "Patriot Cow."*

Fundraising for purchase of the animal is ongoing. A Chinese auction will be hosted on Saturday, October 27 in the auditorium of building 4. Donations of theme baskets, crafts, artwork, and gift certificates are welcomed and deliverable to the Batavia volunteer program office.

#### Day of Honor Recognizes Minority Veterans

The VA Western New York Healthcare System paid tribute to more than 300 veterans in a formal Day of Honor ceremony held in May. Well over 850 family members, distinguished guests, staff, volunteers and community members came out to say "thank you." More than 30 sponsors secured the financial backing to insure that this event was indeed a reality.



*Keynote Speaker, Charles W. Nesby, Director, VA Center for Minority Veterans.*

The volunteer program staff was an integral part of this planning committee. The Day of Honor was a "first-ever" Joint Resolution passed by Congress that was signed by former President Clinton to honor and recognize the service of minority veterans in the United Armed Forces during World War II.





## Wish Lists

### Albany

- ❖ Coffee (decaf)
- ❖ Funds to buy:
  - Assisted Living Devices
  - Electric Hi Lo Mat for physical therapy
  - Fish tank maintenance
  - Van for the DAV Transportation program
  - Wheelchairs (\$122.48 each)
- ❖ Newspaper subscriptions

### Bath

- ❖ Birthday program items - stationary, stamps, etc.
- ❖ Board games
- ❖ Canteen books
- ❖ Computers for veteran computer lab (laptops, scanners, printers)
- ❖ Entertainers
- ❖ Fish tank and tropical fish
- ❖ Health and comfort items
- ❖ Lap robes and afghans
- ❖ Playing cards
- ❖ Socks (non-skid)
- ❖ Sponsors/monetary donations for:
  - Clothing room
  - Fitness trail
  - Holiday events
  - Holiday gifts
  - Jump start program
  - Recreational programs
  - Women veteran programs
- ❖ Suitcases, duffle bags, etc. for discharged patients
- ❖ Televisions (9" for patient's bedside)

### Canandaigua

- ❖ Aquarium (50-gallon)
- ❖ Canvas bags with zipper
- ❖ Coffee (decaf)
- ❖ Craft items
- ❖ Disposable plates, bowls, cups, napkins and dinnerware
- ❖ Funding for:
  - General purpose account for veteran's needs
  - Recreation services account
  - Storage of pontoon boat
- ❖ Gift certificates - Wal-Mart, Wegmans, pizza places, McDonalds, Wendy's, movie theatres, etc.
- ❖ Holiday cookies - Homemade cookies are needed for December 22 at 12:30 p.m. for the wards during the gift distribution.
- ❖ Holiday luncheons - staff does the shopping, cooking and cleanup - these luncheons are often the only holiday celebration some of our patients get
- ❖ Holiday purchasing fund - monetary donations are needed for the more than 700 patients who receive items.
- ❖ Lap boards
- ❖ Mittens/scarves for the mitten tree
- ❖ Personal care items (shampoo, shaving cream, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, lotion, new socks, underwear, etc.)
- ❖ Phone cards
- ❖ Pool table
- ❖ Rototiller
- ❖ Sponsored luncheons, pizza parties, trips
- ❖ Tickets for bowling and sporting events
- ❖ Washing machine and dryer

### Syracuse

- ❖ Coffee Service (\$40/year)
- ❖ Comfort items
- ❖ Funding for National Rehabilitative Games
- ❖ Funding - Quality of Life Fund
- ❖ Personal care items (toothpaste, shaving cream, razors, etc)
- ❖ Satellite TV Program (1 year/ \$5,000)
- ❖ Telephones
- ❖ Televisions
- ❖ TV/VCR with cart
- ❖ VCR
- ❖ Wheelchairs
- ❖ Wheelchair cup holders
- ❖ White T-shirts - various sizes

### Western New York (Batavia and Buffalo)

- ❖ Fish tank maintenance
- ❖ Funding for
  - Coffee cart program
  - Patient recreational activities
- ❖ Newspaper subscriptions
- ❖ Outdoor gazebo
- ❖ Patient comfort items
- ❖ Television (9" color with swing arm)
- ❖ Treadmill(s)
- ❖ Veterans Transportation

If you would like to make a donation/sponsor an event, please contact voluntary service for more information.

Prior to purchasing items or donating large items, please contact voluntary service to make arrangements.





# Calendar of Events

## Albany

- September 20 2:00 p.m.  
POW/MIA Remembrance Day  
Auditorium
- September 24  
VAVS Committee Meeting 1:00 p.m.  
Auditorium
- October 5 7:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Capital Region Veterans Stand Down  
Colonie Elks Lodge, Rt. 155, Latham
- October 20 9:00 a.m.  
Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk  
Gather at VAMC parking lot.
- November 8 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
Women Veterans Health Fair  
Auditorium
- November 11  
Veterans Day Parade  
Walkers needed to show our VA patriotic spirit.

## Bath

- September 20 2:00 p.m.  
POW/MIA Recognition Day  
Medical Center Gazebo (or Bldg. 92)
- October 3 1:30 p.m.  
VAVS Executive Committee Meeting  
Volunteer Office, Bldg. 44
- October 17 1:30 p.m.  
Quarterly VAVS Meeting  
Leisure Room, Bldg. 92
- November 4 11:00 a.m.  
Masonic Visitation/Gift Distribution  
Nursing Home Care Unit 2/3, Bldg. 78
- November 11  
Veterans Day 8:00 a.m.  
Muffin and juice distribution, Bldg. 76  
Ceremony, Bldg. 92 1:00 p.m.

## Canandaigua

- September 11 1:00 p.m.  
VAVS Committee Meeting  
Bldg. 5, Auditorium
- November 7 1:30 p.m.  
Female Veterans Day Tea  
Bldg. 1, Director's Conference Room  
All women veterans are invited to attend.
- November 13 1:00 p.m.  
VAVS Committee Meeting  
Bldg. 5, Auditorium
- December 10 1:00 p.m.  
VAVS Gift Wrap  
Bldg. 5, Auditorium
- December 22 12:30 p.m.  
VAVS Holiday Gift Distribution  
Bldg. 5, Auditorium

## Syracuse

- September 7 12:00 p.m.  
Labor Day Celebration  
Auditorium  
Sponsored by the Herkimer Elks Lodge.
- October 11  
Spaghetti Luncheon/Dinner Fundraiser  
11:00 a.m. - 1 p.m. & 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
Donations to benefit VAVS programs.
- October 31 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Hospital Wide Halloween Party  
Auditorium  
Sponsored by the VFW and Auxiliary.
- November 8 All day  
Veteran's Day Appreciation Activities  
Employees and volunteers "Thank a Vet."
- December 2 & 3  
American Legion Auxiliary Gift Shop  
Hospital and the Community Care Center

## Western New York (Buffalo and Batavia)

- September 11 1:30 p.m.  
VAVS Meeting  
Batavia, Bldg. 4, Auditorium
- September 20 9:00 a.m.  
POW/MIA Recognition Day  
Hearthstone Manor, Depew
- September 27 9:00 a.m.  
Employment Housing Fair  
Buffalo, Room 301  
Sponsored by VA Homeless Program and  
Veterans Industries.
- October 5 9:00 a.m.  
Commanders Day  
Buffalo, Room 301
- October 16 6:30 p.m.  
VAVS Annual Service Organization  
Awards Dinner  
Hearthstone Manor, Depew
- October 26 1:00 p.m.  
Chinese Auction  
Batavia, Bldg. 4, Auditorium
- November 11 10:30 a.m.  
Veterans Day Memorial Service  
Batavia, Flag Pole Area  
Ceremony 2:00 p.m.  
Buffalo, Room 301
- November 28 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
Thanksgiving Dinner for Veterans  
Buffalo, Food Court/Canteen Area
- December 2 - 6  
VAVS Facility Holiday Season Decorating





## Student Volunteer Makes a Difference

*At the Rep/Dep Conference, Network Communications held a contest to solicit articles for the newsletter. The following is the first place submission and the winner of \$40 in canteen gift certificates, donated by Veterans Canteen Service.*

*By Sue DeRosa and Dewann Beatson, Canandaigua Volunteers*

The Canandaigua VA Medical Center welcomes new student volunteer, **Justin Ferguson**. Justin is 11 years old and attends Marcus Whitman School in Rushville where he is a sixth grade student. Justin is a bright student who has received the "5th Grade Citizen Award" and other awards for his schoolwork. He also plays football at school.

Justin has two brothers and one sister. His sister volunteered at the Canandaigua VA for her Senior Community Service project. In the 6th

grade Justin will be expected to do community service too. He has chosen to do it here at the Canandaigua VA. When he talked this over with his future 6th grade teacher, he decided to get a jump-start on it by volunteering this summer.

Building 7 is happy to have Justin working with them three days a week for four hours. The patients enjoy his company and they interact very well together. Justin plays games with patients (chess mostly, something he has done since he was six years old), does escorting, assists the patients with meals, assists with recreational activities such as bowling, and helps wherever he is needed.

Justin isn't a complete stranger to volunteering. His first experience with patients was when he accompanied his mother to work on Take Your Child to

Work Day and again when he helped with the Patient Recognition Picnic.

Justin said, "I would rather be here at the VA volunteering than at home waiting for my mom to

come home." Justin enjoys the company of the patients and we know the patients enjoy Justin's company too.

While at home, Justin enjoys drawing and riding his four-wheeler. Justin's mother works here at the Canandaigua VA on the same floor where Justin volunteers so he is also learning what mom does for a living.



*Justin at the Patient Recognition Picnic*



VA Healthcare Network  
Upstate New York  
Network 2 Communications  
465 Westfall Road  
Rochester, New York 14620

Official Business  
Penalty for private use  
\$300

PRESORTED STANDARD  
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